1-1-1971

Approach to reading through creative experiences

Mary Roger Suszek

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AN APPROACH TO READING THROUGH
CREATIVE EXPERIENCES

by
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A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Education (Reading Specialist)
At Cardinal Stritch College

Milwaukee, Wisconsin
1971
This research paper has been approved for the Graduate Committee of the Cardinal Stritch College by

[Signature]

(Advisor)

Date: [Jul 14, 1972]
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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

The highest form of commendation a teacher can receive is to be called an "eclectic teacher". She is one who takes advantage of good practices whenever she can, and regardless of their source. The best label that can be applied to the Language-Experience Approach is "The Eclectic Approach to Reading Instruction". It embraces the best practices regardless of their source and does so in a functional communication-oriented way.1

The above quotation is offered as an invitation to all teachers involved in the basal reading approach to become "eclectic teachers" by adopting the wealth and wisdom of the entire Language-Experience Approach or portions of it. For too many decades, educators have overlooked and by-passed the advantages or strengths of other approaches by limiting themselves strictly to the use of basal readers. "We use uniform materials and uniform approaches in teaching un-uniform children."2

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Children are different and they need the freedom to find themselves in a school environment that respects their experiences, impulses and their right to express them. The Language-Experience Approach offers this opportunity to all.

Statement of Problem

Administrators feel secure when their classroom reading teachers are conscientiously following the directives in the teacher's manual. However, many creative and ambitious teachers are willing to break the barriers, remove the imposed limits and still experience an organized reading program. Therefore with this viewpoint in mind, the writer has intended this paper to fulfill a two-fold purpose:

1. to encourage teachers using the Basal Reader to enrich their young students by incorporating within their method some aspects of the Language-Experience Approach.

2. to present evidence, through means of samples of children's work and photographs, that the Language-Experience Approach stimulates and encourages students to free expression of their thoughts, feelings and creativity.
Scope and Limitations

This paper surveyed the literature related to the Language-Experience Approach dealing with young readers, reported during the last ten years. A few readings prior to the time were used because of their direct and solid contributions to the matter concerned.

For two months, the writer worked in this area using portions of this approach with sixty cooperative first graders and two teachers at St. Rita School in Dallas, Texas. Evidence of what they produced is presented in Chapter Three.

Summary

This chapter begins with an invitation to all teachers to become "eclectic teachers". The purposes of the paper were clearly presented. The scope and limitations of the project were given.

The following chapters will cover an overview of the Language-Experience Approach emphasizing the results that can be gained by a creative teacher who recognizes the uniqueness of each individual child, regardless of his background.
CHAPTER II

SURVEY OF RELATED LITERATURE

Teacher-Pupil Relationship

Since the purpose of this paper is to encourage teachers to enrich their students through an eclectic approach to reading, the writer feels that Glasser promotes (even though unconsciously) the Language-Experience Approach by the following statement:

Teachers have been given a bad lead by psychiatrists and psychologists who have suggested that teaching should be an objective activity. What the teacher must do instead is get involved with students and talk to them. He must get them to think and express their own ideas and get other children to listen to them. If a child does not read well, the teacher cannot reject and fail him, because failure is the process of moving away from people. The child will try to read because he knows he is moving closer to the teacher. He must not be rejected as a result of his failure to satisfy the teacher concerning his apparent competence as a reader.¹

Nixon believes the teacher must fulfill children’s needs and give them the freedom to express their feelings.² The


educators who feel deeply concerned about the total development of each child will find a wealth of practical suggestions in the approach under consideration.

The Language-Experience Approach to young children is a program in which the child's own thoughts, ideas and language as well as objects in his environment form the basis for his introduction to reading.\(^1\) Aukerman states that the child uses the words he wants to say and to read, and then sees those words printed on paper for him to read and to copy and to read again. The words are his words. They are the words of his language and of his experience, not the contrived vocabulary of the basal reader.\(^2\) "This approach is without doubt one of the most practical pursuits in reading instruction because it attempts what for so long has been recommended—an integrated language arts program."\(^3\)


Another strong point of this program . . . is the importance attached to developing a positive attitude toward reading. As Dr. Allen points out, "It is far more important to help each child develop a positive attitude toward reading than it is to discover his level of reading ability." This may well determine a child's reading habit in later years. We spend an awful lot of time teaching boys and girls how to read, but too little, I fear, in developing, the habits and the desire to read.

**Definition of Language-Experience Approach**

The insight and knowledge educators have about this approach can never equal what Dr. R. V. Allen has obtained through promoting this ever growing program. It would be inexcusable to overlook his simple definition and thought-provoking goals:

As I have searched out the TRUTH FOR ME over the years, I have come to view reading instruction as an act of raising levels of sensitivity of each child to the world in which he lives. With this simple and broad definition of reading, I am able to invite every child, regardless of whether his language is fluent or faulty, into our classrooms on an equal basis. This is because my goals are not those of achieving uniformity, but goals of leading each child to

- see things he has never seen before;
- hear things he has never heard before;
- have deeper feelings about himself and others;
- observe something unusual in the usual things around him and to say usual things in unusual ways;
- look at something ordinary and see something extraordinary in it;
- discover new meanings in his surroundings;
- heighten imaginations to include the delights of songs and stories;

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1 Lohman, "Reactions to Using Language-Experience in Beginning Reading," p. 27.
- express ideas in many ways—through talking, painting, writing, singing, dancing, acting;
- enjoy studies of English as a language; and
- embrace as one's own, ideas and language of great authors.¹

What other approach extends its goals so deeply into the child's imagination, ideas and feelings? What other approach accepts the child and uses "the wealth" that was obtained during his previous years? No other single method except the Language-Experience Approach. Its involvement and integration, Kittell claims, will enable the student to make reading a "happening" ... ²

**Integrating the Four Basic Skills**

In order to integrate this approach into the reading program, four basic skills must be put to use: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. "By using these skills together the teacher helps the children become aware of their need for becoming better listeners and speakers and for learning to read, write, and spell."³ "This togetherness

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¹ R. Van Allen, "Bringing Your Own: An Invitation to All Children to Bring Their Personal Language to School," Claremont College Reading Conference, Thirtieth Yearbook (Claremont, Calif.: Claremont College Curriculum Laboratory, 1966), p. 28.

² Jack E. Kittell, "Reading and Relevancy," Claremont College Reading Conference, Thirty-fourth Yearbook (Claremont, Calif.: Claremont College Curriculum Laboratory, 1970), p. 44.

of skill development makes possible the continuing use of each child's own experience background as he grows toward maturity."¹

When a child enters school, he is quick to learn that not everyone speaks "his" language. However, "the language that children bring to school is of more than a little importance. It is the best material that the teacher has to use."² The first real lessons in language are given at home. "Patterns of sentence structure, vocabulary, voice quality, pitch of voice and rhythm of expression are molded by the language the child hears during the first five years."³

"The major task of the teacher of beginning reading is to help children realize that the language they speak is the language that can be written, and then read back."⁴ Their first initiation into reading should therefore be speech translated into writing, instead of writing that must


⁴Veatch, Reading in the Elementary School, p. 236.
somehow be changed into speech. Veatch claims that we
must help children write their ideas, rather than struggle
on a jazzy one dreamed up by the teacher the night before. Ideal teachers always start by respecting and cherishing
the language of their students. There must be as much respect for the children's language as for our own. It is all language, and it is all beautiful.

"Listening is the other half of speaking." However, as Monroe says, being silent in the classroom while someone is speaking is not synonymous with listening. Skill in listening cannot be assumed. In a 1949 report, Wilt found that children spent fifty-seven and a half percent of their time in school in some listening activity. Yet, only about thirty percent of the teachers considered this to be an important subject. More recent research

1 Lohman, "Reactions to Using Language-Experience," p. 27.


4 Monroe, Children's Experience, p. 5.

such as Strickland\(^1\) and Loban\(^2\) has generally confirmed these findings.

The school day, according to Monroe, is full of opportunities to develop better listening habits, and the approach to language learning through experience capitalizes on many of the child's experiences. There is always opportunity to say, "Let's Listen!"\(^3\)

"The reading teacher is a teacher of language and communication skills. He knows that development in reading closely parallels development in speech."\(^4\)

When reading is introduced as a natural, functional process of communication, it makes sense to children. It is indeed to them talk written down. The children's own words are used, thus delaying the learning of sound-symbol relationships until he is linguistically and psychologically ready to cope with sound relationships.\(^5\)

According to Glasser, involvement is the key to the whole process. "Teachers must find ways to show children that

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\(^3\)Monroe, Children's Experiences, p. 6.

\(^4\)Dechant, Improving the Teaching of Reading, p. 137.

\(^5\)Lohman, "Reactions to Using Language-Experience," p. 27.
reading can be an exciting activity."¹ "When instruction in reading begins with having children talk about things and letting them watch their talk being written down, a significant thing happens."² The children begin to realize success in learning to read. "The teacher of course is directing and guiding, making sure that her basal program is a useful tool in developing for each pupil his maximum potential in listening, speaking, reading, and writing."³

Gertrude Mildreth tells us that "the tendency to keep reading and writing apart in beginning reading instruction is unfortunate because of the mutual relationship between the two."⁴

The problem with delaying writing is that when the child is finally asked to write, he is unprepared, unmotivated and unused to putting his thoughts on paper, although he may have mastered the skills of decoding and encoding written symbols. He has acquired the attitude that writing is an artificial task to be done only when the teacher says, 'write'. Writing has become something a child chooses to do or thinks of as fun. Certainly it is not something that has anything to do with him or his experiences. If he can get away with it, he does not write at all.⁵

²Monroe, Children's Experiences, pp. 7-8.
⁵Niederer and Raim, "Encouragement for the Young," p. 199.
According to Allen and Halvorsen, skills such as letter formation, word recognition, spelling and phonics, style and form, etc., can be developed most meaningfully from the child's own language. From this foundation the child moves easily into utilizing these skills in reading ideas of other authors.\(^1\) Utilization of the child's own language as a basis of reading instruction may result in a high degree of independence in writing and reading according to Allen and Halvorsen.\(^2\)

**Language-Experience Approach**

Having developed the importance of the four basic skills in learning to read, the writer will now explain the Language-Experience Approach to reading. This approach abandons the rigidity and structure of the basal program and allows "Both teachers and students to go in the direction of their own strengths and interests."\(^3\) Boyer believes that the most important thing is to keep the daily work within the present needs of the particular children. . . .

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Then keep them challenged enough to go as fast as they are able to go, but not fast enough to make them frustrated or unhappy because of a defeated feeling.¹

Dictation is the first step in the Language-Experience Approach. As Batinick reports, within a few days, children are asked to bring pictures of their own choosing to their "reading group". There the teacher and children exchange comments and decide on a story to be written on the picture. The rest of the children watch eagerly as they see the speech of one child take form on his picture. They participate by helping the teacher decide about initial sounds, capital letters, and punctuation.²

"When the children can read their own stories, they are encouraged to read them aloud to others."³ Boyer has an excellent idea in her *See Me* book. She explains, "I taught them to write SEE, then ME. Putting them together led them to make a picture of themselves. The sheets were stapled together and put on the library table."⁴ Van Allen suggests another experience--the language laboratory that extends throughout the day. "Language skills are extended

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³John F. Savage, "How to Teach Reading?" *Catholic School Journal* (May-June, 1970), p. 11
as children listen to stories and recordings, view films and filmstrips, make individual and class books, dictate stories to each other, and study words. ¹ "The Magic Writing Corner" of Batinick is a creative but inexpensive idea.

An excellent location for this spot is in the corner out of the steady flow of traffic. This area should be equipped with a table and chairs, as well as materials designed to assist the child in this exciting adventure. They will include the following:

1. Writing tools - Oversize crayolas; oversize pencils; different colored magic markers; felt-tip pens
2. Sources of words - Dictionaries (picture and simple word); word ladders (vocabulary flash cards connected by notebook rings); a pocket chart of words requested by the children
3. Blank books - Four to twelve pages (8" x 11" sheets of manilla drawing paper folded in half, stapled in the middle and covered with colored construction paper)
4. Sources of letters - Picture cards with manuscript alphabet (both capital and lower case); three-dimensional wooden manuscript letters. ²

A child receives a warm feeling of satisfaction when he is able to read his own story to a group. Each creation, according to Burrows, is unique, because there in black and white is the idea that until now has been an intriguing but invisible part of himself—the glow of success is


personal because each story is woven out of his own being.

Tradebooks also make popular reading material. They are most like normal children's speech patterns, while basal readers limit students to an artificially controlled vocabulary which research has never justified. The development of a basic sight vocabulary is individual to each child and is governed by the oral vocabulary of the child.

"Skill development takes place within the context of these reading activities in the daily program." Phonics instruction is a necessary and natural part of a Language-Experience Approach, according to Van Allen, but it is developed from a "say it" to "see it" sequence rather than from the "see it" to "say it" sequence employed in many other approaches. As the teacher helps children read their stories, "she calls attention to letter names and sounds, familiar words, punctuation, and the other basic skills and elements that the children need." In this relaxed,

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2Veatch, Reading in the Elementary School, p. 299.

3Savage, "How to Teach Reading?" p. 12.


5Savage, "How to Teach Reading?" p. 12.
classroom situation children develop, among other skills such important ones as

- left-to-right eye movement
- line-to-line progression
- awareness of sentence structure
- increased power of sustained attention
- ability to organize ideas
- ability to sound out words, beginning with the recognition of sounds of initial consonants and progressing to more complex phonic situations
- ability to hear and recognize endings such as s, ed, ing
- use of context clues to recognize a word in their own stories
- use of picture clues to recognize words in the stories of their friends
- sight vocabulary of those words which naturally recur in children's writing.¹

Prevailing Atmosphere

"Learning takes place best when an environment is established that permits success, security, understanding and mutual respect to thrive."² Children need freedom to be different. According to Nixon they need freedom to express their feelings in ways not destructive to self and others, feelings of anger, aggression, and frustration--yes, and also of sadness and sorrow and pleasure and joy.³

Important aspects of this atmosphere are the teacher's personality and attitude. He should be a warm, accepting


person; have respect for each child, what he is and what
he writes; demonstrate an interest in many things and
ideas; and share his ideas and enthusiasm with children.  

Savage advises that an approach is found to be successful
because the teacher believes in it, wants to see it work,
and words hard to see that it does work.  

This applies to the Language-Experience Approach perhaps even more than to
any other.

Summary

Discussion in this chapter began with the ideas of
Glasser on a teacher's involvement with the students. In-
volvement is vital to the Language-Experience Approach. After
presenting the definition and goals, the writer proceeded to
explain how the four basic skills of reading must be inte-
grated in this language arts method. The chapter was con-
cluded with a provocative statement that in order for any
approach to be effective, the teacher must work to make it so.

The final chapter will include practical suggestions
and evidence, through samples of children's work, that this
program encourages the total-involvement of each child.

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1Mildred Ellisor, "Classroom Opportunities to Express

2Savage, "How to Teach Reading?" p. 16.
CHAPTER III

IMPLEMENTING THE
LANGUAGE-EXPERIENCE APPROACH

Ideas and Experiences

"Imagination is more important than knowledge, for knowledge is limited whereas imagination embraces the whole world."¹ So said Einstein many years ago. Yet, the same idea holds true today. In this final chapter, the author will present some examples of children's imagination as brought out in the Language-Experience Approach. This approach will be correlated with the Macmillan reading series.

When a child enters first grade, he is anxious to demonstrate all that he knows. The truly educated teacher will give him an opportunity to do so from the very start of school. Since two different first grade classrooms were used as sources of children's work, for this paper, two different procedures will be explored. "The most beautiful

¹Marlene Glaus, From Thoughts to Words (Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1965), p. i.
thing about it is there is no set pattern such as the teacher's manuals present because teacher and classes go in the direction of their own strengths and interests.\footnote{Boyer, "Letting Children Raise Their Own Horizons," p. 167.}

On the first day of school, roll was taken by a teacher showing cards with the children's names printed on them. Any child who recognized his own name could come up and take the card. After a few days the teacher called out only the first sound of a name and had those children stand up whose names began with that sound. Sometimes a rhyming word would be given for a child's name. "Whose names rhyme with tack?" Later on the class enjoyed playing "post office." Anyone who could call out the name, could deliver the card to that person. This gave the class an interesting introduction into the likeness and differences of words. Sounds became more personal to them.

Knowing that the children were already fluent in oral language, another teacher began with an actual reading and writing experience based on a common activity--coming to school. As the teacher wrote on the blackboard what the children dictated, she read each word aloud. She stopped and pointed out anything "different" as it appeared--such as capital letters, punctuation marks, etc. Then, the children read with her and finally, each one who wanted to, came and read the story. When the child did this, the
teacher slid her hand along under the words to show left-to-right progression and to give the children aid in word connecting.

WE ARE IN SCHOOL.
OUR FRIENDS ARE HERE, TOO.
SISTER ROSE IS OUR TEACHER.

After this activity, the teacher made each child his own copy of the story to read. Besides using the communication skills—listening, speaking, writing, and reading, each child found certain rules of courtesy in this class project—waiting for one's turn, speaking loud, thinking about what others said.

Although this experience had obvious instructional value; it was also used as a diagnostic tool by the teacher. She could easily detect those children with problems in listening or speaking, writing their names, or calling letters of the alphabet.

Once the children were given a chance to read there was no need for anything further except that an organized plan—motivation was intrinsic. One day, the teacher brought a puppy to class. The children all crowded around the basket to observe all that it would do. They saw the puppy eat a dog biscuit, walk around the room, rub his cold nose on a child, lick a friendly leg, and return to his basket to sleep. After the class had gone back to their seats, the teacher asked them to think about what they had
seen. After sharing their ideas and feelings about the experience orally, the class dictated sentences to the teacher who recorded them on the blackboard. She then duplicated a copy of the story for each child to take home and read.

WE HAVE A PUPPY.
HE IS SOFT AND WARM.
HE CAN BARK.
OUR PUPPY IS NAMED BOLO.
WE LOVE HIM.

Now, that motivation had been given for reading, the next day the children were introduced to their first pre-primers by looking at a large story card. On this card were Bolo and his friend Velvet, a cat. As the teacher read the sentences aloud, the children were excited when they detected the familiar word "Bolo". One child asked the question, "Who owns Bolo?" What an excellent time to present the names Jeff, Mary, and Mike!

Since the purpose of this chapter is to give examples of children's creativity, no more time will be given to correlating the activities with a basal text. However, a correlation of the Language-Experience Approach with a basal reader is important to the eclectic teacher. In the following pages the author will present various activities and the results of these activities which were recorded during the months of September and November for the specific use of this paper.
Oral Experiences

These oral activities were enthusiastically received by the first graders; even the slowest students were able to participate fully in each area.

Fortunately, the guidance program at St. Rita School (Focus I - S.R.A.) called for an oral exercise using Alfie, a little puppet. After listening to a story about Alfie the Elf, the children were encouraged to take the puppet and discuss their problems with it. Besides encouraging self-expression, this activity allowed each child to project himself without personal exposure. Young children often talk to a puppet as to a person. The following are excerpts from a tape of the children discussing problems with Alfie:

Chris: "Alfie, when I always play football, my friends tackle me and I fall on the ground real hard and I feel sad!"

Andy: "Alfie, every time I go to bed, my sister always comes in my bed and messes it up and I feel mad, so I mess up her bed!"

Kelly: "Alfie! Whenever my Mom and Dad go somewhere, my sister always bosses me around and hits me and kicks me and I feel mad!"

Blane: "Alfie, when my brother gives me a piggy-back ride and he goes too fast, it makes me scared."

John: "Alfie! Whenever I sit down in a chair, my brother pushes me out and takes it himself and I feel mad."

Another oral activity was the "scribble story." By the time a child reaches first grade, he is an expert at scribbling; yet, he gets very little opportunity to practice this "art". One teacher passed out sheets of paper and
instructed the children to scribble out an imaginary story. "To be able to state one's thoughts clearly and effectively is the primary purpose of all language expression." Therefore, after the stories were completed, volunteers came up to read their stories aloud. Some examples of these stories follow:

Butchi: "My mother said I could go to the store to buy three yo-yos. I did!"

Joey: "I wanted a stuffed animal. My mother said I could go to a store with her. I did and I saw a stuffed animal. It was a stuffed dog. I asked my mom if I could have it. She said, 'Yes.' I took good care of him and I loved him and I went to bed."

J.P.: "Once upon a time there was Daddy, Momma, and baby. They liked to take walks around the block. Everytime they came home, someone was in their house. They hid under the stairs. They found out who it was. It was one little baby rabbit. They kept it over night and it died the next day."

Bobby: "My baby didn't take care of her pacifier. Mommy threw it out and that's why she didn't take care of it. You would take care of it, wouldn't you?"

While studying a unit of foods in health, the teacher brought in one kind of fruit or vegetable each day. One day, she brought in an orange, the next day an apple, then some lettuce, etc. Each child could touch, smell, and look as they worked with descriptive words. The children were encouraged to give their own words. After peeling the

orange they discussed the sections, seeds, etc. Each child was given a piece of an orange. Children then described the taste and listened to the sounds of biting and chewing. This activity emphasized multi-sensory experiences and learning words to describe a child's world of sensation.

THE ORANGE FEELS RUBbery.
THE ORANGE LOOKS DARK ORANGE.
MY APPLE TASTES SOUR.

It is a known fact that good speaking habits pave the way to better writing. Therefore, aiming for descriptive language will lead to more creative writing in the future. One exercise enjoyed by a class was the use of similes. The children sat by tables facing each other. Table one was asked to finish the thought "as loud as . . ."; table two worked with "as fast as . . ."; table 3, "as large as . . ."; table 4, "as clear as . . ."; table 5, "as small as . . ." and; table 6, "as quiet as . . .". Some examples given were

- as loud as ten jets flying across the sky together
- as fast as a witch on a broom
- as large as a thousand elephants
- as small as an ant

An effective bulletin board is an excellent tool for motivating oral discussions. Happiness was the inspiration behind one bulletin--happy people, smiling faces, and the quote "A smile is your personal sunshine." Each child who
wanted to receive a small smile button got up and finished this sentence—"I like to smile when ...". A few of the ideas were:

I LIKE TO SMILE WHEN I LAUGH.
I LIKE TO SMILE WHEN I HEAR A JOKE.
I LIKE TO SMILE WHEN SOMEONE ELSE GETS IN TROUBLE.
I LIKE TO SMILE WHEN IT'S TIME FOR SCHOOL.

Plate I

After the experiences of speaking about smiling faces, the children were led to a discussion about the looks and feelings of others. Two questions under consideration were "How do people look?" and "How do people feel?" The children thought up as many words to answer these questions as possible. Then, magazine pictures were labeled and put on the bulletin.
SHE FEELS HAPPY.

SHE LOOKS PRETTY.

HE FEELS HUNGRY.

HE LOOKS SHORT.

Plate II

One Monday morning, the children were surprised to find that almost everything in the room had a label. There were labels for board, chair, desk, window, file, reading corner, books, games, magnetic board, chalk, light, bulletin board, eraser, calendar, book shelf, carpet, floor, sink, trash can, drawer, blinds, heater, bathroom, television, coat rack, record player, door, and movie screen. This experience was used to get across the idea that everything has a name, a name to be seen in print, to be used in
speaking and in writing. Several different games were played—using the words in a phrase or a sentence, trying to find the word, spelling the word, finding the longest word, etc. The children thus repeated the words until they felt comfortable in using them and seeing them written down.

Dictated Experiences

"From oral expression, the next step is . . . dictating for someone else to write. This is done by the teacher . . . ."¹

Since winter was approaching, it was natural for the children's work to turn to ice and snow. In one class, the teacher read A Snowy Day to the children and had a short discussion. Then, one by one the children came up and dictated a sentence or two about winter.

As the teacher takes dictation from a child she talks about such things as letter formation, the conventional symbols which represent the oral sounds which the child makes. She helps children discover words which are alike, words which begin alike. She is preparing children for independent writing at the same time she is helping them recognize the common words in our language.²

While the children were waiting for their turns and also to help them remember their sentences they drew pictures. (Plates 3-4, 5-6.)

²Holcomb, "Reading: The Language-Experience Approach," p. 73.
Plate III

DICTATED SENTENCES ABOUT WINTER

I like to throw snowballs.

Bill

Plate IV

In winter, I can catch a cold.

Bob
Today is too cold to go outside.  

Susan

Plate VI

I like winter because it is cold.  

Pat
A similar activity used the topic "When I grow up." (Plate 7.) After practicing single ideas, the children were ready for longer stories. When asked to dictate a dream they had, two children came up with these:

Once I grew up and was a football player for the Dallas Cowboys. I played in a game and it rained and the ball was slippery on the kick-off and I fumbled the ball and Minnesota recovered the fumble. It was a pass and I received it and I ran 43 yards for a touchdown and we won the game 35 - 17!

Joey (Plate 8.)

I went on a space ship. We found a land and we explored it and the space ship was attacked and the space ship left me and a monster came. It was the same monster that attacked the ship--but they left a gun and I shot him. He was short-circuited and then a man came to help me. After the man helped me then the man pulled on a rope and the rope pulled me up to the space ship.

Matt (Plate 9.)

In another room, the teacher displayed a picture of a little puppy who was a birthday present. This led to quite a discussion about dogs and other pets. While each child was drawing a picture of his pet, the teacher was copying the sentence dictated by each child about his picture.

Plate X
Plate VII

DICTATED STORY: WHEN I GROW UP

I would like to be a pilot.
I can ride a jet.

Brett
Plate VIII

DICTATED STORY: JOEY'S DREAM
Plate IX

DICTATED STORY: MATT'S DREAM
Perhaps the most common example of dictated work would be the experience chart.

When making the experience reading charts, there is opportunity for social development which is an important part of reading development. Children develop in their appreciation and consideration of the contributions of others. They also gain status in the group as their ideas and contributions are accepted and respected. This status is a factor which motivates children to undertake the writing of individual books and to continue to contribute their ideas to the class.¹

Following are examples of these charts made by the first grade classes in reading groups.

September 1 - 3

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TODAY IS THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL.
WE GO TO ST. RITA SCHOOL.
WE ARE IN THE FIRST GRADE.
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September 6 - 10

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MY CLASSMATES ARE MY FRIENDS.
I LOVE THEM.
I AM KIND TO ALL OF THEM.
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September 13

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MARY IS THE MOTHER OF BABY JESUS.
YESTERDAY WAS HER FEAST DAY.
HAPPY FEAST DAY, HOLY MARY.
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September 14 - 17

SUMMER IS ENDING.
THE NIGHTS ARE GETTING COOL.
THE LEAVES ON THE TREES ARE TURNING YELLOW.

September 20 - 24

OUR SCHOOL IS BEAUTIFUL.
SEE THE MANY WONDERFUL THINGS IN IT!
I WILL TAKE GOOD CARE OF SCHOOL THINGS.

November 1 - 5

MR. HOLMAN KEEPS OUR SCHOOL CLEAN.
I WILL HELP HIM.
I WILL NOT THROW PAPERS ON THE FLOOR.

November 8 - 12

SOME FLOWERS ARE ASLEEP NOW.
THEY REST ALL WINTER.
THEY DO NOT LIKE COLD WEATHER LIKE WE DO.

November 15 - 19

THE PILGRIMS WERE THANKFUL TO GOD.
THEY CAME FROM A LAND ACROSS THE OCEAN.
THEY MADE A BIG THANKSGIVING DINNER.
THEY INVITED THE INDIANS TO COME.
November 22 - 24

| PLEASE IS A MAGIC WORD.                  |
| IT HELPS US TO BE KIND.                  |
| IT REMINDS OTHERS TO BE KIND.            |

November 29 - 30

| SOON ADVENT WILL BEGIN.                  |
| ADVENT IS FOUR WEEKS LONG.               |
| WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR BABY JESUS.    |
| HE WILL COME AT CHRISTMAS TIME.          |

Experience chart making helps to meet these purposes:

a) recording an experience
b) arousing a desire to read
c) enriching child's speaking vocabulary
d) building a reading vocabulary
e) stimulating expression
f) developing self-confidence
g) improving speech and reading habits
h) measuring reading readiness
i) building early reading skills

From reading various books on this subject, however, the author has found certain precautions that must be taken to insure reading success.

a) Without careful control, the children may simply memorize the stories, instead of reading them.
b) Poor construction or poor grammar will need to be repaired by the teacher while the chart is being made.

c) Some words may never be repeated so the children can learn them from one chart to the next.

d) Mature children may be retarded by being kept on reading charts when they could be rapidly reading books.

When these precautions are heeded, the experience chart can be an invaluable aid to the Language-Experience Approach.

**Written Experiences**

The final step in the Language-Experience Approach is writing. "First attempts at writing should be brief and should arise from the natural activities of children."

Recalling to mind an activity used early in the year—smiles and happiness—the teacher decided to relate this to the opposite emotion of sadness. Beginning with an oral discussion, each child proceeded to write down what he considered sadness to be. Before beginning, the class selected any difficult words that might be needed and the teacher put these on the blackboard. When everyone had completed their pages, a cover was added and the book was stapled together. The title was printed—Sadness is . . . .

A few examples of the pages of this book are following (Plates 11, 12, 13, and 14.) Other books were made in the same manner—Happiness is . . . ., Thanksgiving is . . . .,

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1 Speaking, Listening, Writing, p. 255.
Sadness is when my Mother leaves me in the house.

Sadness is lonely and being by yourself.
Plate XIII

Sadness is falling off a bike.

Julie

Plate XIV

Sadness is a sad time when my brothers hit me. Terry
Crying is . . . , Laughter is . . . , etc. As each book was completed, it was added to the library shelf. Oddly enough, these "home-made" books were in the greatest demand by the children.

One day, this class heard a story about The Little Engine That Could. When they had agreed on the meaning behind the story, each child went to his desk to print the most important part of the story. Besides being a helpful activity for written expression, this exercise helped the children learn to pick out the main points in a story and write them in a few words. (Plates 15, 16, and 17.)

In another class, three large charts were placed on the blackboard. On one chart was written "Who?", on another "Did What?" and on the third chart "Where?". The class was divided into three groups, each of the groups having one chart to work with. Group A printed as many Who's as possible—John, Snoopy, Lou, the mailman, etc. Group B thought up things to do—went skating, plays ball, was eating, etc. Finally, Group C worked with places—on the shore, in town, at the movie, etc. When all three groups were finished the charts were again placed in front of the room. By taking a phrase from each chart, the children were able to produce beautiful, yet original, sentences. Some examples are:
Fox

The little blue engine pulled the little train across the mountain.

Tom Fox
Plate XVI

Patricia Grady

Little blue train
will you please
help us get over
the mountain?
Betsy Loveck.

The train engine broke down. A blue engine came along and helped them to the city.
PRETZEL WAS DIGGING FOR A BONE IN NEW YORK.
SNOOPY WAS BARKING AT A CAT AT MY HOUSE.
RAY WAS READING BOOKS IN THE DEN.
JOHN WAS EATING FOOD AT THE FAIR.
RONNIE WAS PLAYING WITH A BALL IN THE PATIO.

As Thanksgiving approached, the children began thinking about Pilgrims and turkeys. After seeing a filmstrip on "Squanto and the First Thanksgiving," the children made up stories about Squanto. A few of them were:

I saw some of the Indians. They were very nice to us. Their friends had a big feast on Thanksgiving. Squanto had to work.

Anne

Squanto said, "Big feast tomorrow. Good people to invite us."

Danny

The Indians and Pilgrims had a feast. They liked it. They liked Squanto. They called it Thanksgiving. They were friends.

Jeanne

As the children are given more and more opportunities to write, they will attain a relative independence in the written expression of ideas.

Summary

In this chapter, the author has attempted to present concrete evidence—through examples of children’s work—of the value that lies in the Language-Experience Approach. First, the author presented the results of certain oral activities. Secondly, dictated experiences were recorded and evaluated. Finally, various written exercises were explored.
Conclusion

It is the hope of this author that others, by reading and evaluating this paper, will be motivated to use similar activities to promote creative expression in young children. This paper has fulfilled a two-fold purpose:

1. to encourage teachers using the Basal Reader to enrich their young students by incorporating within their methods some aspects of the Language-Experience Approach.

2. to present evidence, through means of samples of children's work and photographs, that the Language-Experience Approach stimulates and encourages students to free expression of their thoughts, feelings, and creativity.

Through the Language-Experience Approach children are involved in living, in doing. They profit most when they are allowed to explore, react, even fail, but teachers must manage it so that young students are eager to try again.
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